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Title page

Article title

Modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment: adapting leadership to meet local conditions and/or changing followers to match personal requirements?

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Modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment: adapting leadership to meet local conditions and/or changing followers to match personal requirements?

Abstract

In this article, we present a study that explores modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment (CLA) and investigates the forces influencing them. Nicholson's (1984) theory of work role transitions was used as the theoretical foundation to explore work role requirements (consisting of role discretion and novelty of job demands) as potential predictors of modes of CLA. Our data were collected from expatriate senior managers working in Thailand. The results show that the majority of our expatriate executives make adjustments to their leadership approach and try to change Thai employees—thus demonstrating the adoption of an *exploration* mode of adjustment—and that role requirements, Thai employee characteristics, the local hierarchy system, and the expatriate leaders' perceptions all influence the latter's modes of adjustment. Based on our findings, we develop a theoretical framework and a number of research propositions. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings.

Keywords

Cross-cultural leadership adjustment (CLA); multinational corporations (MNCs); Thailand; work role transitions (WRT)

Introduction

The rapid growth of the international business market makes effective cross-border management and leading of people an increasingly important item on the agenda of business leaders and multinational corporations (MNCs). It is suggested that, in order to lead foreign subsidiaries effectively and motivate host employees to achieve organizational goals, it is essential for expatriate leaders to adjust their leadership approaches to suit host country conditions (G. Hofstede, 1980; R. House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Yu, 1997; Tung & Miller, 1990). Most studies on cross-cultural leadership, however, have focused on the impact of the leaders' own cultural values on their leadership styles (see, e.g., Brodbeck et al., 2000; Brodbeck, Frese, & Javidan, 2002; Javidan & Carl, 2005; Lee, Scandura, & Sharif, 2014), while research on expatriate adjustment has mainly focused on the *degree of work and life* adjustment of international assignees (see, e.g., Ravasi, Salamin, & Davoine, 2015; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999; Shay & Baack, 2004), but has neglected the *mode of leadership* adjustment of senior managers. No research, as far as we are aware, have empirically examined the *mode* of cross-cultural leadership adjustment (CLA) which, in the

present study, refers to the pattern by which expatriate leaders change their leadership approaches and/or their subordinates when working in a different cultural setting.

Due to the lack of research mentioned above, it is not clear whether expatriate managers, when leading cross-culturally, adjust their leadership approach to address the characteristics of local employees or whether they change local employees to meet their requirements. The present study has two objectives: 1) to explore the modes of leadership adjustment of expatriate business leaders and 2) to investigate the factors influencing their CLA modes. The need for a study of the modes of CLA can be argued on grounds of business relevance and gaps in current situational leadership theories. Assigning expatriates to work in foreign subsidiaries is a common practice adopted by many MNCs for the purposes of strategic control, coordination and/or employee development (Bonache, Brewster, & Suutari, 2001; Brewster, 1997), and cross-cultural adjustment is an issue that concerns both expatriates and MNCs (Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001). The study of the modes of CLA, therefore, should tell us about the adjustment patterns of expatriate leaders when they face the task of leading subordinates whose cultural values and work behaviours are different from those found in their home countries. Situational leadership theories, such as the situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1972) and the culturally endorsed implicit theories of leadership (House et al., 2004), advocate the need to adjust leadership behaviours according to the characteristics of the followers; however, empirically, we know very little about whether leaders do so and the patterns by which they adjust them. The study of the modes of CLA, therefore, should provide us with empirical insights into leadership adjustment behaviours and help validate situational leadership theories.

We first explore CLA by analyzing the qualitative data collected from expatriate senior managers working in MNCs in Thailand. Then, based on Nicholson's (1984) theory of work role transitions (WRT), we deductively examine whether role requirements predict CLA modes. This approach aims at providing rich exploratory insights into the research issues and also at examining the theoretical framework in the context of cross-cultural leadership adjustment. We explore CLA from the perspectives of senior managers as they are commonly regarded as leadership figures, are critically important to the success of their organizations, and can provide unique insights into their own inner state as they experience the process of their actions directly and possess the greatest familiarity with their tasks (Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Levine, 1980). Thailand is an ideal research setting to explore the adjustment of expatriate business leaders as many MNCs employing business leaders from North American and European countries operate there with subordinates who hold different cultural norms, values, and beliefs from those found in the home countries of the business leaders themselves.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Firstly, we summarize two relevant leadership theories and two lines of research related to CLA, and describe the concept of leadership adjustment. Then, we provide a review of Nicholson's WRT theory, present our predication of the CLA modes and describe the research methods. This is followed by the research findings and by their discussion. We conclude the paper with a summary and with its implications for theory and practice.

Cross-cultural leadership adjustment

Over the past few decades, several leadership theories have been developed; these have included two that are relevant to leadership adjustment: situational leadership theory (SLT) and the culturally-endorsed implicit theories of leadership (referred to as CLTs in House et al., 2004). SLT proposes that leaders should modify their leadership approach according to the task-relevant maturity of their followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1972). An optimal leadership style (defined as specific combinations of leader task and relationship behaviours) should match the levels of subordinate maturity (defined as a combination of follower commitment and competence). So, with subordinates of very low-level maturity, leaders are advised to adopt a ‘telling’ approach; on the other hand, with subordinates of very high maturity, a ‘delegating’ approach is recommended.

While SLT considers the characteristics of followers, CLTs go further and consider leadership in intercultural settings. CLTs were developed by House and his colleagues (see e.g. R. House & Aditya, 1997; R. House et al., 2004; Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque, & House, 2006), who asserted that beliefs about leadership are shared among individuals from the same cultural background, and that expectations regarding the best way to lead are culturally endorsed, thus “expected, accepted, and effective leader behavior varies by cultures” (R. House & Aditya, 1997: 454). For example, it is found that the predominant and expected leadership styles in Thailand are authoritarian and paternalistic (Adams & Vernon, 2004; Rungteltkengkrai & Engkaninan, 1987; Soponkij, 2010), while those expected in the UK and USA are participative and charismatic/value-based (House et al., 2004; Northouse, 2010). CLTs suggest that leaders need to adjust their behaviours to adhere to their followers’ cultural expectations in order to be effective and accepted by the latter.

Although both SLT and CLTs emphasize the importance of adjusting leadership approaches to address the characteristics of followers, empirical research examining whether leaders do so and the ways in which they do so, particularly in a cross-cultural setting, is virtually non-existent. We thus turned to the extant research on expatriate adjustment and cross-cultural leadership.

In expatriate adjustment research, adjustment is commonly regarded as the process by which an individual achieves a “fit and reduced conflict between the environmental demands and the individual’s behavioral and attitudinal inclinations” (Zimmermann & Sparrow, 2007: 66). Research on expatriate adjustment has largely focused on exploring the effects of a range of antecedent variables on the *degree* to which expatriate managers adjust to their host countries in three dimensions—general, social interaction, and work/role adjustment—which are mainly based on the work of Black and colleagues (see, e.g., Black & Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991) and have been used as a theoretical underpinning by numerous studies (see, e.g., Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012; Ravasi et al., 2015; Shaffer et al., 1999). Although the dimension of work/role adjustment has been examined in this line of research, no

detailed account has been provided for the *modes/patterns* through which expatriate leaders adjust their *leadership role*.

We found that, in cross-cultural leadership research, most studies have examined how the leaders' own cultural values influence their leadership styles (see, e.g., Brodbeck et al., 2000; Brodbeck et al., 2002; Javidan & Carl, 2005; Lee et al., 2014; Leung & Bozionelos, 2004); only a small number of studies have examined how expatriate managers react to new cultures and why and how they adjust their leadership styles. Festing and Maletzky (2011) defined CLA as "the process of synchronization of incompatible work-related interaction routines" (p. 186) and argued that, to be successful in foreign assignments, expatriate leaders need to find a way of bringing together apparently incompatible routines (e.g., work patterns, leadership approaches) between expatriates and local employees. Such adjustment process is argued to be embedded in the structure of meaning and the value of investigating the 'creation of meaning' aspect of leadership is emphasized (see Festing & Maletzky, 2011; Linder, 2015). For example, Linder's (2015) study investigated the impact of perceived cultural distances on the willingness of German expatriates to adjust their symbolic leadership when working with Filipino employees. It was found that meaning, symbols and high-perceived cultural distance had led to the adoption of adjustment behaviours aimed at harmonizing interaction with their subordinates and reducing negative social sanctions. This line of research provides us with knowledge of the *process* that may influence expatriate adjustment efforts, but little information is provided about the *mode* by which expatriate leaders adjust their behaviours. In the present study—based on Nicholson's (1984) theory of work role transitions (reviewed in the next section)—the mode of CLA is defined as the pattern by which expatriate business leaders adjust their leadership approaches and/or try to change their host country subordinates to balance conflicting demands in cross-cultural contexts.

Overall, CLA has not received enough attention from researchers. As pointed out by Festing and Maletzky (2011), leadership adjustment has been neglected in the extant research and the "results of current conceptual and empirical research do not allow one to draw adequate conclusions regarding the adjustment of leadership behavior" (p.190). The present study aims at filling this void by exploring the CLA modes of expatriate business leaders working in a cultural setting different from that of their home country.

Modes of adjustment and theory of work role transitions

Modes of adjustment involve the manners or patterns by which individuals adjust to work role transitions or changes. A work role transition is defined as "any change in employment status and any major change in job content" (Nicholson, 1984:173). This could be brought about by a wide range of events, including: a new job, an international transfer, a domestic job transfer, a promotion, and company reorganization (Black, 1988; Nicholson, 1984). Some scholars (e.g., Dawis & Lofquist 1984; Feldman & Brett 1983; Van Maanen & Schein 1979) essentially classified modes of adjustment into two dimensions—active and reactive; the former involves individuals adjusting by actively changing their new roles, while the latter sees individuals adjusting

by changing themselves to match their new roles. Nicholson (1984) expanded the two dimensions and developed a theory of work role transitions (WRT).

This study uses WRT as the theoretical foundation upon which to explore the modes of CLA and the factors influencing them; it explains how, following an international transfer, expatriate business leaders may adjust their leadership approaches and/or change their subordinates depending upon their roles in the organizations and the novelty of their tasks. The theory, which has been complimented as an exemplary theoretical framework for explaining work roles and adjustment that provides “a codification of theoretical ideas on the topic of work role transitions” (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991:299), is widely cited in empirical research on international transfer (Black & Stephens, 1989; Shay & Baack, 2004), job relocation (Munton & West, 1995), career transition (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011), role and identity (Chreim, Williams & Hinings, 2007; Ibarra, 1999), and entering new jobs (Ashforth & Saks, 1995). Below, we briefly review the theory and explain how we applied it to our study.

Nicholson (1984) described transitions as phenomena involving changes in the two dimensions of personal and role development. Personal development involves those reactive changes in an individual that are aimed at meeting environmental requirements (Nicholson & West, 1988:105), and entails changes in an individual’s attributes, such as values, attitudes, behaviours, identity, skills, and leadership. Applied to expatriate business leaders, this dimension involves changes in the ways in which they lead their host country subordinates (i.e., leadership adjustment) in order to meet local conditions. Role development, on the other hand, involves an individual proactively trying to “change role requirements so that they better match his or her needs, abilities, and identity” (Nicholson, 1984:175); this may include changing task objectives, work methods, scheduling, subordinates, and interpersonal relationships. Applied to expatriate business leaders, whose key task is to deliver results by leading and managing people, this dimension involves leaders attempting to change their host country subordinates and the ways in which the latter perform their jobs (i.e., subordinate change) in order to match their personal requirements.

Modes of adjustment

Combining the two dimensions, Nicholson proposed four modes of adjustment:

- 1) *Replication* (low personal development, low role development), in which the individuals make few changes to themselves and to the tasks’ contents. The outcomes of this mode of adjustment replicate and maintain existing personal attributes and behaviours, and organizational routines. In this study, this mode is shown when expatriate leaders make few leadership adjustments and impose little change upon their subordinates (see Figure 1).
- 2) *Absorption* (high personal development, low role development), in which the individuals modify their attitudes and behaviours but make little change to the tasks’ contents. In this study, this would be

shown when expatriate leaders modify their leadership approaches but impose few changes upon their subordinates.

- 3) *Determination* (low personal development, high role development), in which the individuals actively change the tasks' contents but make few changes to themselves. In this study, this mode is shown when expatriate leaders actively change their subordinates but make little leadership adjustment.
- 4) *Exploration* (high personal development, high role development), in which the individuals make changes to both themselves and the tasks' contents. In this study, it is shown when expatriate leaders change both their leadership approaches and their subordinates.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Predictors of modes of adjustment

Nicholson proposed that the four modes of adjustment can be predicted by two aspects of work role requirements.

The first is role discretion which represents an individual's capacity to change the task content (e.g., work goals, management practices, and interpersonal communications). The theory proposes that high discretion roles—which provide an individual with significant opportunities to modify task content—will bring about the determination or exploration modes of adjustment, while low discretion ones will result in the replication or absorption modes (see Figure 1). In other words, role discretion will be positively related to task content change (i.e., subordinate change in our study).

The second aspect of role requirements, the novelty of job demands, is defined as “the degree to which the role permits the exercise of prior knowledge, practiced skills, and established habits” (Nicholson, 1984:178). High novelty refers to low similarity between the new and previously held roles. It is argued that the degree of novelty will determine the degree of change in an individual's attributes: the higher the novelty, the greater the pressure placed on an individual to make personal changes. The theory proposes that high novelty will bring about the absorption or exploration modes of adjustment, whereas low novelty will result in the replication or determination ones. Thus, novelty of job demands will be positively related to personal change (i.e., leadership adjustment in our study). In the next section, we describe how we applied the two aspects of role requirements to our study to predict CLA modes.

Prediction of modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment

WRT theory predicts that expatriate senior managers working in Thailand would implement high levels of leadership adjustment and high levels of subordinate change—corresponding to the exploration mode (see the top right quadrant in figure 1). In other words, that they would significantly modify their leadership approaches

and actively try to change their subordinates in order to meet local conditions and to match their personal requirements.

This prediction is based on two grounds. First, senior managers hold top positions in Thai subsidiaries and have high degrees of role discretion, which are argued to be directly related to an individual's position in the organizational hierarchy (Jaques, 1976). WRT suggests that a high discretion role will lead to expatriates changing their subordinates. Second, expatriate executives face the task of leading Thai subordinates whose cultural characteristics and work behaviours are significantly different from those found in the expatriates' native countries (i.e., high novelty of subordinate characteristics). Thailand is categorized as a collectivist, feminine country, high on power distance and uncertainty avoidance (G. Hofstede, 1980; G. Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; R. House et al., 2004); these cultural characteristics are significantly different from those found in the UK, the USA and Australia (i.e., high individualism and low power distance), whence most of our expatriates come. WRT suggests that the high cultural differences found between Thai employees and the expatriates' native countries will lead the expatriates to change their leadership approaches. The next section describes the methods we used to examine such prediction.

Methods

Research Design

We adopted a qualitative methodology and collected the data from expatriate senior managers in two stages: we first conducted semi-structured interviews and then a qualitative on-line survey. The qualitative research design was adopted in order to explore CLA through the leaders' experiences and perspectives and gain a deep understanding of their adjustment when working in a different cultural setting.

Participants

The research participants were 176 expatriate senior managers working in Thailand; among these, nine (four American and five British CEOs) were interviewed and 167 completed the online survey. Convenience and snowball sampling methods were used.

The interviewees' sample was from two sources: the Marketing Association of Thailand (MAT) and LinkedIn, an online professional social network. MAT is a professional, not-for-profit organization that offers training programmes and provides its members with business and marketing advice. We contacted MAT to request assistance with finding prospective research participants; as a result, 11 executives were contacted, three of which agreed to be interviewed. Five expatriate executives were contacted via LinkedIn. Of these, one British and one American executive agreed to take part in the study, and referred four of their colleagues to us.

The expatriates who completed the on-line survey were contacted through LinkedIn. This was done because a compiled contact list of expatriate senior managers was not readily available. LinkedIn is the largest business-oriented professional networking platform on the Internet, with over 313 million users in more than

200 countries as of October 2014 (LinkedIn, 2014). LinkedIn allows its users to create professional profiles; through these, we were able to view their work information (e.g., occupation, job role, job level, work experience, country where they worked, industry sector, year of service) and to select our sample.

The majority of our participants were male (94.3%), which is in line with the low ratio of females holding senior positions reported in the business press (Fairchild, 2014; Morris, 2013). Over three-quarters (76.1%) were aged between 40 and 59 years old. The sample group covered 25 different nationalities and over 30 industries. About two-thirds (67.4%) of the respondents had worked more than five years in Thailand, and 24.1% had worked there more than 15 years.

Data Collection

Pilot interviews

We started by conducting nine individual, face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These allow flexibility and maximum exploration of the research issues. The interviewees were asked about their views on the characteristics of Thai employees, business systems and culture, and their own leadership approaches; and whether or not the former influenced the latter. They were also asked whether they had adjusted their leadership approaches and/or changed their Thai employees and work practices. Those who reported having adjusted were asked why and how they had done so (see Appendix 1 for an extract of the interview protocol). The interviews were conducted in English, lasted between 35 and 66 minutes, and were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Online qualitative survey

Building on the interviews and WRT, we designed and conducted an on-line qualitative survey—consisting of three sets of open-ended questions—aimed at gaining insights into the expatriate leaders' viewpoints and experiences to probe more widely and deeply into their modes of adjustment and into the factors that had influenced them (see Appendix 2 for the online questions). The first set of questions was designed to explore the expatriate leaders' approaches in leading Thai subordinates and whether the latter, their culture and their business practices had influenced such approaches. The second was designed to investigate whether the expatriates had adjusted their leadership approaches. The third explored whether they had changed (or had tried to change) their subordinates and/or the subsidiaries' work practices. In addition, a final set of questions collected the respondents' demographic information. The survey, which ran from October 2014 to January 2015, was administered through Qualtrics, an online survey platform, which provided the two main benefits of containing the data collection costs and administering the survey easily and speedily.

The qualitative survey sample was collected starting from an initial seed of 12 sourced from LinkedIn; from these, we expanded our network to 932 connections through a three-step procedure. First, within the connections of each of initial contacts, we looked for expatriates working in Thailand. Second, we asked those of the latter who fit our sampling criteria to add us to their LinkedIn network. Two sampling criteria were

used. A) the job levels had to be senior, with job titles such as CEO, CFO, director, chairman, managing director, president, senior vice president and general manager. This criterion was used for two reasons. One: their experiences could greatly contribute to the knowledge of leadership and of organizational practices. Two: their high role discretion would enable us to test the association between role discretion and subordinate change, as suggested by WRT theory. B) the senior managers were not to be Thai nationals (this was effected by checking the names and photos shown on the LinkedIn profiles). Third, those expatriates identified in step two who had accepted us in their networks were each sent a research invitation. This included an introduction to the research project, a web link to the survey, a respondent anonymity assurance, and the researchers' contact information. It also offered those who would have accepted to take part a report on the project's findings.

In total, over 1,500 LinkedIn connection requests were sent, 920 of which were accepted. These were sent invitations to participate in the research, and reminders four weeks later. Some candidates informed us that they were unable to complete the survey for reasons such as: "do not have Thai subordinates" and "have just left Thailand". Eventually, the total number of completed survey forms received was 167 (excluding 12 invalid incomplete ones). Each respondent provided an average of 1.5 pages of Qualtrics report (text), generating a total of 248 pages.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed first inductively and then deductively using a two-stage process. This was done because, on the one hand, the nature of the research involved an exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives, and, on the other hand, we were interested in exploring CLA modes using the theoretical predictions proposed by the theory of WRT.

To analyse the leaders' experiences and perspectives, we carried out a thematic analysis involving six main steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Firstly, we read the interview transcripts and the survey responses several times to familiarize ourselves with the data. Secondly, we grouped similar topics together. Thirdly, we coded the data. The first author and two researchers from a different research team independently coded a batch of ten transcripts. In a joint meeting, we compared and discussed our independent codes to determine an initial coding scheme. Based on the latter, we coded another batch of ten transcripts and met again to discuss any new codes emerging from this round. The process was repeated until we had coded the fourth group of ten transcripts and had found no newly emerging themes (i.e., created no new codes). The coding process generated 42 codes or subthemes, which were agreed upon and included in our final coding scheme. The two researchers then independently coded/categorized the remaining transcripts. The inter-rater agreement (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997; Cohen, 1960) between the two researchers' codings was 76%. Through discussions with the first author, most of the discrepancies were reconciled, yielding an inter-rater agreement of 88%. Fourthly, through repeated theme reviews and discussions, we counted instances, rated degrees of leadership adjustment and subordinate change, looked at how all themes

were related to each other and sought factors that could explain the leaders' modes of adjustment. Fifthly, we verified whether the themes and patterns corroborated the data. Finally, we identified and summarized the key themes and the leaders' modes of adjustment.

Figure 2 summarizes the data analysis progression. The bottom row in the figure shows the sample interview and survey questions; the next row displays the codes used to categorize the responses; the next lists the sub-themes emerging from the responses; and the last (top) row shows the key themes and how they are related to each other.

The inductive data analysis process described above enabled the identification of the themes that were present in the data, avoiding the imposition of the theoretical constructs proposed by WRT theory. Subsequently, based on the theory, we deductively analysed how role discretion and novelty of employee characteristics influenced CLA modes. This theory-driven process limited our analysis to the framework of WRT, but allowed us to examine whether the predictions proposed by the theory could be found in cross-cultural leadership transitions.

To explore the expatriate business leaders' modes of adjustment, we analysed their responses to our questions "Do you have to adjust your leadership approach working in Thailand at all?" and "Have you changed (or tried to change) Thai employees and/or the subsidiary's work practices?". The analysis of the former question's responses enabled us to examine the degree of leadership adjustment; that of the latter's enabled us to explore the degree of subordinate change. The analysis of the responses given to the former question enabled us to examine degrees of leadership adjustment; that of those given to the latter enabled us to explore degrees of subordinate change. To analyse the degrees of adjustment/change in the two dimensions of leadership adjustment and subordinate change, we carefully read each expatriate's responses to the questions and rated their degrees of adjustment on a 7-point Likert scale (1=very little support; 7= very strong support). Ratings of 1 to 3 represented low degrees of adjustment/change, while those of 5 to 7 implied high ones. We then populated each of them into a 2x2 matrix, like that shown in figure 1, according to the points rated. For example, we allocated those expatriates who had received ratings of 6 in both dimensions in the exploration mode of adjustment; and those who had scored 6 in the leadership adjustment dimension and 2 in the subordinate change one in the absorption mode. This process helped us identify the expatriates' modes of adjustment based on the four modes of adjustment proposed by WRT theory.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Findings

The interview and survey results gave us an insight into the importance of the characteristics of Thai employees, of the local culture, of the subsidiaries' business practices, and of the leaders' perspectives in influencing leadership adjustment. We present our findings in two parts. In the first, we report a key factor influencing the leaders' modes of CLA—the characteristics of Thai employees and how such characteristics

are shaped by local social customs, religious beliefs, and local culture and institutions. In the second, we present those CLA modes.

Thai employee characteristics

Over 90% of the respondents stated that leading Thai subordinates was very different from leading their counterparts in their home countries, and that a number of the former's unique characteristics greatly influenced the way they led/managed them. Here, we report the three characteristics most mentioned.

Inexpressiveness

Almost all of the leaders pointed out that a major characteristic of their Thai employees was their inexpressiveness, their unwillingness to speak their minds, and their tendency to keep things to themselves. This had presented a challenge for the expatriates as they were unable to understand the viewpoints of their subordinates and the reasoning behind the Thai managers' decisions. This inexpressiveness was thought to be the result of a combination of hierarchy, religious beliefs, and face-saving.

Hierarchy is prevalent in Thai society and workplaces (Jingit & Fotaki, 2011; Siengthi & Bechter, 2004). Many expatriates expressed that they had found it difficult to get their subordinates to speak their minds due to the prevalent hierarchical management tradition. They stated that Thais respected authority and seniority to the extent that subordinates or juniors did not question it in the decision-making process and would provide the answers that their managers expected to hear.

In addition to hierarchy, many respondents believed that Buddhism, which is followed by over 90% of the population, had a profound influence on the way Thais work and interact with management. *Karma*, a Buddhist dogma, was mentioned by the respondents as having a significant influence on behaviour. The "doctrine of karma [is] an explanation for how certain aspects of one's present experience are consequences of previous acts, including acts in former existences, and an incentive to perform certain acts which will ensure greater freedom from suffering in this life or future ones" (Keyes, 1989: 122). Thais therefore generally accept their fate and do not question leaders.

Another reason for the Thais' unwillingness to speak up is to save their own and others' 'face'. A British expatriate said that the employees were unwilling to inform the management about any problems in order to save face; they thought that, should they bring up any issues, it would reflect badly on them. An Australian expatriate shared the same views and expressed that the importance ascribed by Thai subordinates to saving face was one of the key challenges in leading them.

Non-confrontationality

The second major characteristic mentioned by the expatriates was the Thais' non-confrontational trait. This is considered to mainly be the result of *Kreng Jai* (เกรงใจ), which is part of the Thai cultural values and refers to "the desire to be self-effacing, respectful, humble and considerate; the wish to avoid embarrassing others"

(Siengthai & Vadhanasindhu, 1991: 234). *Kreng Jai* makes the Thais very friendly, warm-hearted, non-confrontational and very considerate about what they say to other people. They tend to say only nice things and not criticize others directly. Several expatriates observed that the Thais were less confrontational than their own home country compatriots.

It was suggested by some respondents that personal confrontations should be kept at a minimum and should always take place behind closed doors, with only the people directly involved present, to prevent anyone from "losing face". This non-confrontational trait was seen by many of the expatriates as an obstacle to reaching the best decisions. One American expatriate commented:

Ineffective teamwork

The third major characteristic mentioned by the executives was the Thai employees' ineffective teamwork. They stated that Thais preferred working in groups but that there was room for improvement in terms of teamwork. They pointed out that the Thai employees liked "their close network" and to "stick to their groups" because they wanted to share responsibility collectively for any mistakes. Some respondents stated that the Thais were ineffective in teams as they liked to be rewarded for individual achievements. They thought that this might have been because their education system did not encourage Thai students to work in teams, and exams and competitions encouraged individuals to work alone.

Notwithstanding the views expressed above, the expatriates praised their Thai employees for their good work ethics, kindness, modesty, loyalty, creativity, intelligence, and helpfulness.

On the whole, we found that the expatriate leaders held very similar views on the characteristics of Thai employees. However, as will be shown below, they reacted differently to those characteristics and showed different modes of adjustment.

Modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment

The results show that the expatriate leaders demonstrated three different modes of adjustment: A) 139 expatriate managers (79 %), indeed the over-riding majority, displayed the *exploration* mode of adjustment (i.e., they made adjustments to both their leadership approaches and to their subordinates); B) 14 (8 %) displayed the *determination* mode (i.e., they made little adjustment to their leadership approaches but actively tried to change Thai employees and their work practices); and C) 23 (13 %) displayed the *absorption* mode (i.e., they largely adjusted their leadership approaches but not their subordinates) (see Table 1). The following sub-sections illustrate the three modes of adjustment.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The exploration mode of adjustment

Our results showed that 139 expatriates adjusted their leadership approach and tried to change their Thai employees because they felt that both these strategies were needed. For example, two British expatriates did so in order to, on the one hand, cater to the characteristics of their Thai subordinates and, on the other hand, improve work efficiency. They stated:

‘I choose to adjust my approach [...] I focus more on social harmony and not upsetting or offending people. I have a less direct approach in Thailand [...] I have tried to change employees. I encourage them to challenge the status quo, to not be afraid to try new things, and to look at things differently’.

(British expatriate, 45-49 years old, Banking)

I adjust my style to a more diplomatic one; namely, approaching every level of the organization with respect and yet portraying a “Fatherly” figure, using my age seniority to my advantage. This is required to get engagement and the best out of my staff [...] I have introduced information exchange fora (Town hall meetings); initially, they were unsuccessful, being only one way, but, eventually, when the staff gained more confidence, they became two way. This was needed because of the “information silos” [the way in which the company worked], no knowledge was being shared and the company suffered accordingly.

(British expatriate, 55-59 years old, Transportation)

The British expatriate’s adjustment from a managerial role to a father figure one was made to match the expectation of the Thai subordinates; as observed by Warner (2003: 234), “the ideal Thai leader is seen as more of a benevolent father than an autocrat”.

Similarly, a senior manager from Pakistan expressed that he had had to change his approach to adjust to the local environment and had tried to make Thai employees more confident in expressing different opinions:

Having worked in North America, Europe and the Middle East, adjusting to the Thai environment meant toning down my relatively bold body language and loud verbal expression to match the gentle demeanor of my Thai colleagues. There was also [a] need to pull back on direct criticism and replace it with more indirect ‘advice’. [...] I’ve had to work on building up people’s confidence to express dissent.

(Pakistan expatriate, 50-54 years old, Research centre)

Overall, the expatriates displayed the *exploration* mode of adjustment because, on the one hand, they observed that their Thai employees had different characteristics from those found in their home countries and in others in which they had worked, and, on the other hand, they perceived that it was necessary to change their subordinates. Therefore, they simultaneously adjusted their leadership approaches (e.g., adopting a less direct and more diplomatic approach) and tried to change their Thai staff (e.g., encouraging them to be more expressive) in order to meet the local conditions and to match their personal requirements.

The determination mode of adjustment

A combination of three key reasons was found to have led 14 expatriates to change their subordinates while maintaining their leadership approaches. First, over half of them believed that the managerial approaches found in their home countries were good ways of working and should be adopted in the Thai subsidiaries. For instance, an American executive said that he largely maintained his American managerial approach and that this was more forceful than that normally found in Thailand:

I would say that my style is much more forceful in terms of responsibility, accountability, straight line, whereas, in the Thai culture, things are looser.

(American expatriate, 55-59 years old, Banking sector)

Second, five of the expatriates maintained their leadership approach because they perceived that it was effective in any multicultural context. For example, the Canadian expatriate (45-49 years old, Banking) said that he had only needed to make few adjustments, as his leadership “is one that has already been used for decades in multicultural groups and has proven to be very effective globally”.

Third, most of the expatriates believed that their Thai employees and the hierarchical system found in Thai organizations needed to be changed. To do so, they encouraged their subordinates to challenge opinions, the chain of command and decisions. In addition, they tried to establish an environment in which employees felt comfortable enough to express their views and break down those factors, such as hierarchy, that could hinder teamwork and the expression of good ideas.

Taken together, these expatriates maintained their leadership approaches because they perceived them to be effective in leading people and actively tried to change their subordinates and local work practices because they perceived that it was necessary. In other words, they tried to change their staff in order to match their personal requirements.

The absorption mode of adjustment

We found that 23 expatriates had not tried to change their subordinates but had adjusted their leadership approaches because they had observed that, culturally, the Thais behaved differently in the workplace from employees of other nationalities. For example, one British executive said that he had had to be gentler and more patient, and give more encouragement. Another British expatriate said that he had adjusted his approach, but had not tried to change his Thai subordinates:

I basically have become a passive helper/critic. I even give advice in a very passive way so that [my] staff doesn't lose face. I don't believe this is a good way of doing things, but the Thai ego in the workplace is easily bruised

[...] I only give advice. In the end, employees are either good at their jobs or they are not. If the latter, then they usually don't last long.

(British expatriate, 40-44 years old, Media sector)

To understand their subordinates' viewpoints while fulfilling their need to 'hide collectively' by giving 'group' opinions rather than individual ones, the expatriates sought unspoken views through indirect means; for example, getting anonymous input in group settings or via supervisors, or talking to staff unofficially during lunch breaks. One executive stated that, in order to draw out information, opinions and recommendations, he had asked questions such as 'What would you do?', 'What have we tried before?', and 'What do you recommend we do?' even when he already had an opinion. Although he had occasionally got frustrated and had to give his own opinion, he believed that asking questions was the only way to hear his staff's recommendations. He stressed the importance of adjusting to the local environment, stating:

The most important thing here is this understanding that, if you are the most senior person, you have to act in a very different way to how you would act in a western environment. Ask more questions, keep your own opinions to yourself or spend more time.

(British Executive, 50-54 years old, Automotive sector)

Overall, we found that these expatriates had deemed it more effective to adjust their leadership approaches than to make any significant changes to their Thai subordinates. In other words, they adjusted their approach in order to meet the local conditions.

In summary, we found *exploration* to be the dominant mode of adjustment among our leaders; only small numbers showed the *absorption* and *determination* modes. In other words, most of them simultaneously adjusted their own leadership approach and tried to change Thai employees, whereas only a small proportion either adjusted their leadership approaches or actively tried to change their subordinates. We also found that the characteristics of Thai employees, the hierarchical system and the leaders' perceptions exerted a strong influence on the expatriates' modes of adjustment. This indicates that external demands (i.e., employee characteristics and local work practices) and internal standards (i.e., expatriate perceptions of the best way to manage) interacted to influence the patterns by which expatriates adjusted their leadership approaches.

In the next section, we summarize our key findings and discuss the reasons behind the adoption of different approaches to deal with the same employee attributes and how these influenced the expatriates' modes of adjustment. On the basis of our findings and discussion, a framework of factors influencing modes of CLA and a number of research propositions are offered for future research.

Discussion

The results of the study show that most of the expatriate business leaders simultaneously adjusted their leadership approaches and tried to change their Thai employees in order to meet local conditions and match their personal requirements. Only a small proportion either only modified their leadership approaches or changed their subordinates. The expatriates can therefore be categorized into three different modes of adjustment: 1) *exploration* (high leadership adjustment and high subordinate change—79%); 2) *determination* (low leadership adjustment and high subordinate change—8%); and 3) *absorption* (high leadership adjustment and low subordinate change—13%). Overall, the findings provide strong support for Nicholson's WRT theory, which suggests that a high role discretion and a high degree of novelty of subordinate characteristics will lead to the *exploration* mode of adjustment. On the basis of the findings, we offer the following research proposition for further CLA research:

Proposition 1: Expatriate business leaders are likely to show the *exploration* mode of adjustment (i.e., they are likely to make adjustment to their leadership approaches and to change their subordinates) when leading subordinates whose cultural characteristics are significantly different from those found in the leaders' home countries.

Our results provide strong support not only for the overall prediction of the *mode* of adjustment proposed by the theory of WRT, but also for the predicted link between high role discretion and high task content change, as most of our expatriate leaders tried to change the values and work behaviour of Thai employees and the hierarchy system. The relationship between high role discretion and high task content change found in the study can be explained by the fact that our leaders held the top positions in their organizational hierarchies, which gave them the power to make and demand changes. This power, which is described by Pfeffer (1992) as 'formal power' and by Astley and Sachdeva (1984) as 'hierarchical authority', gives top management great latitude to modify or manipulate the organizational content so that it better matches their requirements, needs, abilities and identities (Nicholson, 1984). Therefore, we arrive at the following proposition.

Proposition 2: The high role discretion of expatriate business leaders makes them likely to change their subordinates when leading cross-culturally.

Our results also provide strong support for the WRT's prediction that there is a relationship between high novelty of job demands and high personal change. The novelty of subordinate characteristics observed by most of our expatriates had led them to adjust their leadership behaviours. This is in line with the core argument made by the SLT and CLTs, which advocate that leadership approaches should be adjusted to address the followers' characteristics.

Proposition 3: Expatriate business leaders are likely to adjust their leadership approaches when faced with high degrees of novelty of subordinate characteristics.

The cultural differences between the expatriates and their Thai employees were not found to have a significant influence on the expatriate leaders' modes of adjustment. Table 1 shows that, although the expatriates were from over 20 countries, most of them (79%) displayed the exploration mode of adjustment. This indicates the adoption of a CLA mode is not associated with an expatriate's cultural background. Similarly, we found the length of stay in Thailand was not associated with the mode of adjustment.

However, given that all the expatriates had the same high role discretion and faced with high degrees of novelty of subordinate characteristics, how can the 21% that either adjusted their leadership (13%) or tried to change Thai employees (8%) be explained? We consider the possibility that the relationship between work role requirements (role discretion and novelty of job demands) and modes of adjustment is not as straightforward as suggested by WRT theory and is, instead, *moderated* by other variables (see Baron & Kenny, 1986), particularly the leaders' perceptions. These moderators are discussed in the following subsections and a framework, based on WRT theory and our findings, is presented in Figure 3.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The moderators of the relationship between high role discretion and the determination mode of adjustment

We found that significant percentages of the leaders who showed the *determination* mode of adjustment shared three perceptions. First, over half of them perceived their approaches to be more effective and superior to those adopted in Thailand. This was illustrated earlier by an American expatriate's description of his American managerial approach as being forceful and accountable. The expatriates' perception of the superiority of their native managerial approaches led them to leave these unchanged and to try instead to change their Thai employees and the way in which they worked. We therefore offer the following proposition:

Proposition 4: Expatriate business leaders' perception of the superiority of their native countries' managerial approaches over those of the host country moderates the relationship between high role discretion and the *determination* mode of adjustment.

Second, five of the expatriates perceived their approaches to be universally applicable and thus that there was no need to adjust them. This was illustrated earlier by the Canadian expatriate's statement that he regarded his leadership to be effective globally. Thus, we develop the following proposition:

Proposition 5: Expatriate business leaders' perception of a universally applicable leadership approach moderates the relationship between high role discretion and the *determination* mode of adjustment.

Third, the leaders perceived that their Thai employees and the work practices used in their Thai subsidiaries needed to be changed to make their subordinates more effective. This perception had led them to change their Thai employees and the way in which they worked. As shown earlier, for example, they tried to change the inexpressiveness of Thai employees by creating a working environment in which the latter would feel comfortable to express their views openly and directly. Thus, we posit:

Proposition 6: Expatriate business leaders' perception of the need to change local employees and work practices moderates the relationship between high role discretion and the *determination* mode of adjustment.

The moderators of the relationship between a high degree of novelty of subordinate characteristics and the absorption mode of adjustment

Turning to the relationship between a high degree of novelty of subordinate characteristics and the *absorption* mode of adjustment, we found that those leaders who showed it shared the key perception of the importance of aligning their leadership approaches to their followers' characteristics. As shown in the study, the expatriates stated that they changed their leadership approaches as they observed that, culturally, their Thai employees behaved differently from those in their home countries. This gave rise to the following proposition.

Proposition 7: Expatriate business leaders' perception of the importance of aligning their leadership approaches to their followers' characteristics moderates the relationship between a high degree of novelty of subordinate characteristics and the *absorption* mode of adjustment.

The moderators of the relationship between high role requirements and the exploration mode of adjustment.

We now turn to the relationship between high role requirements (consisting of role discretion and novelty of subordinate characteristics) and the *exploration* mode of adjustment. The study found that most of the expatriates changed both their leadership approaches and their Thai subordinates. This *exploration* adjustment mode is in line with Nicholson's (1984) prediction that high discretion and high role novelty will lead to both personal and task content change. Nevertheless, our results suggest that the *exploration* mode is the outcome of not only the high role requirements mentioned above, but also of the expatriates' perception of the need to both change and align with the characteristics of their subordinates. On the one hand, this perception had led the expatriates to, for example, try to change the inexpressiveness trait of their Thai subordinates by building

their confidence to express dissenting views; on the other hand, it had led them to align their leadership approaches to the characteristics of their subordinates by, for example, adopting a less direct approach, giving passive advice and seeking unspoken views through informal and anonymous means. Thus, our findings bring us to derive the final proposition, as follows:

Proposition 8: Expatriate business leaders' perception of the need to both align their approaches to and change the characteristics of their subordinates moderates the relationship between high role requirement and the *exploration* mode of adjustment.

We have shown that the relationship between high role discretion, high degree of novelty of subordinate characteristics and adjustment modes are moderated by the leaders' perceptions. The expatriate leaders who maintained their leadership approaches and tried to change their subordinates perceived that the local employees needed to be changed, and/or that their approaches were superior or universally applicable. On the other hand, the leaders who adjusted their approaches perceived that it was important to align them to the characteristics of their subordinates. Our study thus indicates that the expatriate leaders' perceptions have a key role to play in influencing their modes of adjustment.

Implications and contributions

This study is the first to empirically examine CLA modes and, as such, presents a number of theoretical, methodological, and practical implications and contributions. Theoretically, our study adds value to WRT theory by suggesting the need to include additional moderators to the relationship between role requirements and modes of adjustment. The present study shows that the expatriates' decisions to maintain or adjust their leadership approach and/or to change their subordinates were *moderated* by, for example, their perceptions of the need to align themselves with the characteristics of their employees or of the superiority of the managerial practices of their native countries. The *direct* positive relationships between role discretion and task content change, and those between the novelty of job demands and personal change proposed in Nicholson's theory, therefore, are not adequate to explain CLA, and adding the relevant moderators to the framework is needed.

Furthermore, our findings on the CLA modes and on the factors influencing them provide empirical insights for situational leadership theories. The SLT and CLTs both advocate that, to be effective, leadership approaches should be adjusted to address the characteristics of followers. SLT is among the best-known leadership theories, and has been covered in many textbooks and leadership training programmes; however, it has been criticized as being prescriptive and lacking empirical support (Graeff, 1983; Northouse, 2010; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009; Vecchio, 1987). The CLTs' assertion that expectations regarding the best way to lead vary by cultures has received support from several empirical studies (see, e.g., Dorfman et al., 1997; Fukushima & Spicer, 2007; Littrell & Valentin, 2005; Neal, Finlay, Catana, & Catana, 2007), however, we know very little about the extent to which expatriate leaders adjust themselves to cater to the expectation of

their host country subordinates. Our study provides empirical evidence regarding the adjustment behaviours of expatriate leaders' and helps us understand the dynamics of leadership behaviour in a cross-cultural context. In addition, we have developed a framework that explains the factors influencing the modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment. This framework incorporates the two independent work role requirement variables proposed by WRT theory and a number of moderators found in our study, and serves as a useful starting point for future research.

Methodologically, by analysing and presenting rich data, the qualitative approach used in the study enabled us to provide a detailed explanation for the expatriate business leaders' CLA modes and the factors influencing them. Most research on cross-cultural leadership had been conducted using quantitative methods and there had often been no contextual information to help interpret the statistical results. In addition, the study's use of LinkedIn to compile the sampling frame provides other researchers wishing to study expatriates with a potentially effective way to get access to an expatriate sample. The contact information of expatriate senior managers is generally difficult to get, and this may constitute one of the main reasons for the lack of research on their leadership approaches. The successful use of the social networking site to contact expatriates will hopefully be picked up by other researchers and stimulate more research on CLA.

Practically, this study enhances our understanding of CLA by providing rich explanations for why and how leaders maintain or adjust their approaches and/or change their subordinates. We found that modes of CLA are influenced by both internal and external factors. Internally, the expatriates' own internal standards with regard to the best ways to manage, together with their own perceptions of the need to change their leadership approaches or to align them with employee characteristics, have been shown to have influenced their modes of CLA. Externally, the local employee characteristics and hierarchical system constitute external demands that influence the leaders' decisions to change their own leadership approaches and/or their subordinates. Thus, external and external factors interact to influence modes of CLA. The findings of this study can help expatriate leaders better understand CLA issues, particularly in the context of Thailand and anywhere leaders face high degrees of novelty of subordinate characteristics; for instance, how their perceptions and their subordinates' characteristics could influence their modes of adjustment. The findings can also help MNCs design leadership development programmes aimed at helping expatriate leaders understand CLA modes.

A further implication that can be derived from our research is that effectively influencing and managing employees in different cultural contexts requires a good understanding of their work attitudes and behaviours, besides adjusting and conforming to local societal norms. Deviation from the latter may result in employee resistance, diminished respect towards managers, high employee turnover, and decreased leader effectiveness.

Limitations and Further Research

As this study provides only exploratory insights into CLA modes and the factors influencing them, there is plenty of scope for further research. The main limitation of this study is that we collected data from mainly

developed country expatriates working in a developing one. The limited variety in the leaders' and followers' cultural and national economic backgrounds limited our ability to provide a fuller picture of CLA. The expatriate executives' modes of adjustment may differ under different combinations of cultural contexts and levels of economic development. For example, the modes of adjustment of Chinese expatriate leaders working in the UK may differ from those of their British counterparts working in Japan. Further empirical research studying expatriate leaders from and working in a variety of cultural and national economic backgrounds/contexts would provide further insights.

Another limitation of our study is that our results may not be representative of the population (i.e., expatriate senior managers in Thailand) due to the use of a non-random sample. Our research participants had been contacted via LinkedIn on the basis of their willingness to take part. This was due to the unavailability of a compiled list of expatriates. Any interpretation of the results should thus bear this limitation in mind. Further research is also suggested to investigate how CLA is influenced by corporate strategies. Although our respondents did not mention whether organizational factors had influenced their adjustment; leaders may be more likely to feel the need to change their leadership approaches to address local conditions within the framework of an organization that pursues a localization strategy, whereas they may not feel such need when a global standardization strategy is followed.

Concluding remarks

The modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment have not received the attention they deserve in cross-cultural leadership research. This neglect may be due to the difficulty in getting access to expatriate senior managers and to the inherent complexities in conducting cross-cultural research (see Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973; Budhwar & Sparrow, 2002; Geringer, Frayne, & Milliman, 2002). Our study provides exploratory insights into this yet virtually unexplored research area. Our results show that the expatriate leaders largely adjusted their leadership approaches and tried to change their subordinates and that their perceptions, role requirements, the characteristics of Thai employees, and the hierarchy system all exerted significant influence on their modes of adjustment. Given the importance to MNCs of effective cross-cultural leadership, the rich qualitative explanations, the theoretical framework and the research propositions provided in the paper offer valuable bases for future research.

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Figure 1. Role discretion and novelty of subordinate characteristics as predictors of modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment, derived from Nicholson (1984)

		Novelty of subordinate characteristics	
		Low	High
Role discretion	High	<i>Determination:</i> Low leadership adjustment High subordinate change	<i>Exploration:</i> High leadership adjustment High subordinate change
	Low	<i>Replication:</i> Low leadership adjustment Low subordinate change	<i>Absorption:</i> High leadership adjustment Low subordinate change

Figure 2. An illustration of the data analysis progression

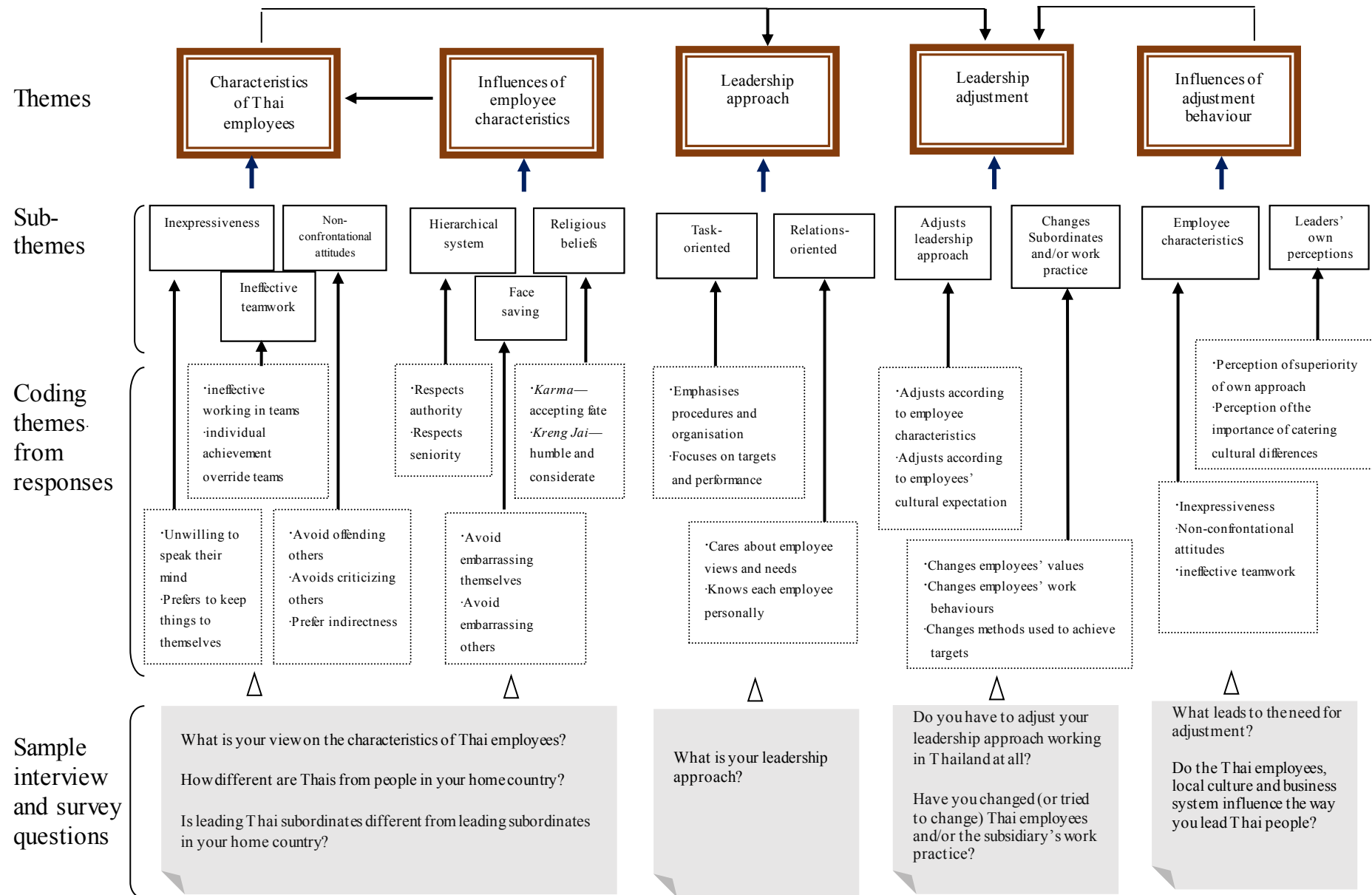


Figure 3. A framework of factors influencing modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment

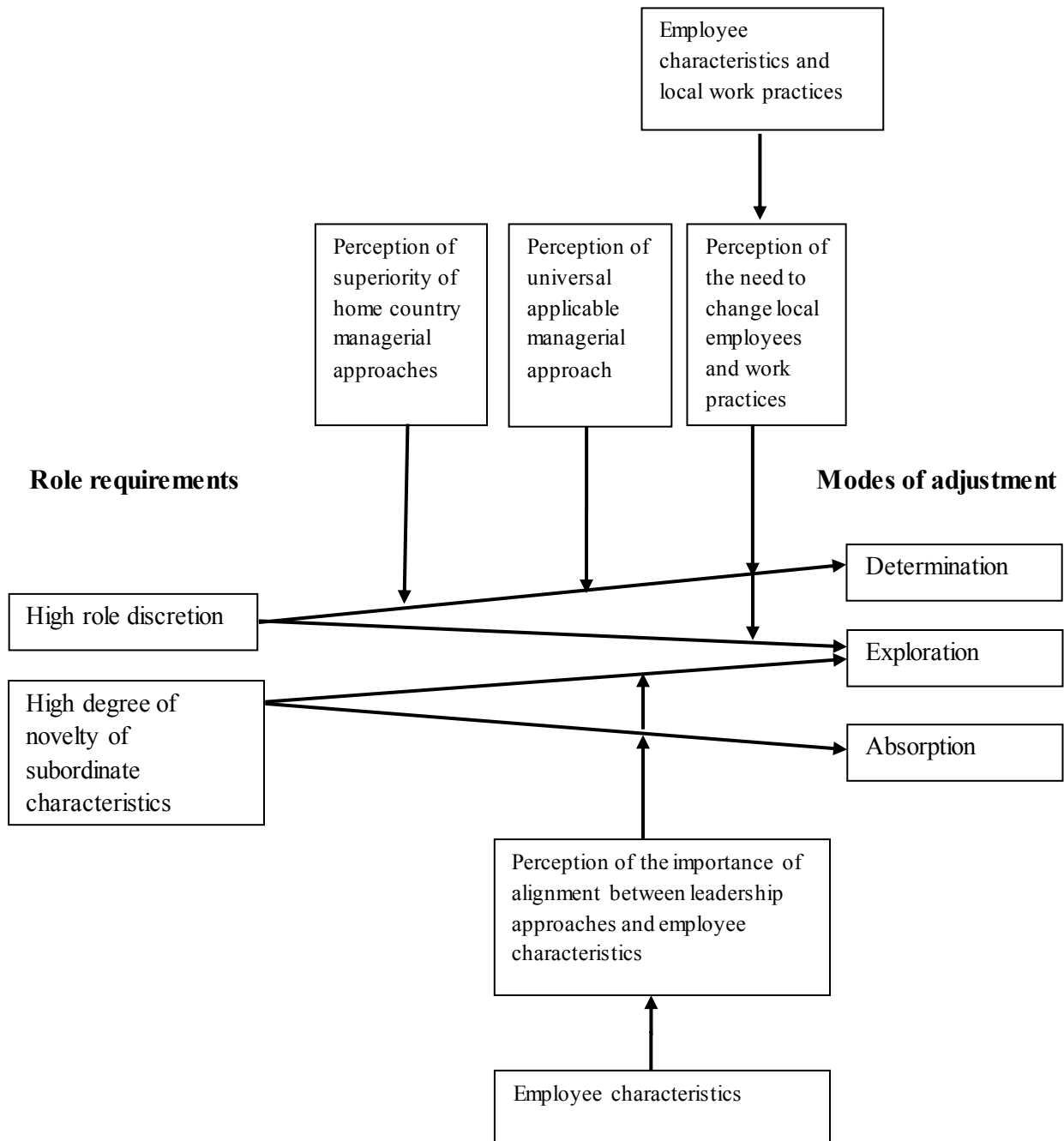


Table 1. Modes of cross-cultural leadership adjustment

	Modes of CLA (N=176)					
	Exploration		Determination		Absorption	
Nationality	No. of expatriate	(%)	No. of expatriate	(%)	No. of expatriate	(%)
American	18	(10.2)	3	(1.7)	4	(2.3)
Armenian	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Australian	19	(10.8)	2	(1.1)	0	
Austrian	1	(0.6)	0		1	(0.6)
Belgian	1	(0.6)	2	(1.1)	1	(0.6)
British	40	(22.7)	2	(1.1)	10	(5.7)
Canadian	0		1	(0.6)	0	
Danish	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Dutch	9	(5.1)	2	(1.1)	2	(1.1)
French	13	(7.4)	0		1	(0.6)
French and Canadian	1	(0.6)	0		0	
German	13	(7.4)	0		0	
Greek	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Indian	5	(2.8)	0		0	
Irish	2	(1.1)	0		0	
Israeli	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Italian	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Malaysian	1	(0.6)	0		1	(0.6)
New Zealander	4	(2.3)	0		1	(0.6)
Norwegian	1	(0.6)	0		1	(0.6)
Pakistani	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Sri Lankan	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Swedish	0		0		1	(0.6)
Swiss	2	(1.1)	2	(1.1)	0	
Swiss and Danish	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Unknown	1	(0.6)	0		0	
Total	139	(79%)	14	(8%)	23	(13%)

Notes:

Exploration: high leadership adjustment, high subordinate change

Determination: low leadership adjustment, high subordinate change

Absorption: high leadership adjustment, low subordinate change

Appendix 1. Extract of the interview protocol

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1. What does leadership mean to you? What is your leadership approach?
 2. What values do you always carry to manage people?
 3. What is your view on the characteristics of Thai employees? How different are they from American/British employees? Does this influence the way you lead Thai employees?
 4. What is your view on local business practices, in terms of the way Thai people do business? How different are they from those in your home country? Do they influence the way you manage local employees?
 5. Is leading Thai people different from leading people in the UK/USA?
 6. Do the Thai employees, culture and institutions/environment influence the way you lead Thai employees?
 7. Do you have to adjust your leadership approach working here at all? What leads to the need for adjustment?
 8. Which things do you like and which don't you like about leading an organization in Thailand?
 9. Is there anything that you wish could be changed?
 10. What are your final thoughts about Thai employees, culture and organizations? What would your advice for foreign managers be?
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Appendix 2. Online survey questions

1. Is leading Thai subordinates different from leading those in your home country? What are the similarities and differences? What are the challenges?
 2. Do you have to adjust your leadership approach working in Thailand at all? If so, what do you have to adjust? What leads to the need for adjustment? How do you adjust?
 3. Have you changed (or tried to change) Thai employees and/or the subsidiary's work practices? If so, what have you changed (tried to change)? What led to the need for change? How did you go about changing it? What were the challenges?
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